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ABSTRACT

In 1985, the New Start Program was initiated at Kingsborough Community College (KCC) to encourage and assist students in academic difficulty at Brooklyn College (BC) in transferring to KCC. With the cooperation of BC's president, a letter was sent to several hundred students who were about to be dismissed from the college, inviting them to attend a KCC orientation and apply for September admission as students in good standing with up to 30 units in credit. They were assigned a counselor to help them to adjust and to monitor their progress. During the first year of the program, 63 former BC students enrolled at KCC, and exhibited high rates of retention and credit completion. Of the 51 fall 1985 entrants, 47 completed their first semester and 43 returned the following spring. Nearly half of the group had perfect rates of course completion for the year, earning a mean grade point average of 2.39. By June 1986, six had been awarded associate degrees and had been accepted to senior colleges. Possible explanations of the students' success at KCC include: (1) initially high levels of academic ability; (2) motivational and developmental progress; and (3) the supportive characteristics of KCC. (Author/EJV)

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Kingsborough Community College
of
The City University of New York

NEW START PROGRAM
REPORT
September, 1985 - June, 1986

Prepared by
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JC 870 070

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Abstract

During the 1985-86 academic year, 63 former Brooklyn College students enrolled at Kingsborough as the initial participants in the New Start Program. They had accumulated large negative deviation indices (mean: -35.76) at Brooklyn and ordinarily would not have been able to continue their education. However, most had passed all three CUNY Skills Assessment Tests and had earned an average of 35.02 college credits before coming to Kingsborough.

At Kingsborough, these students showed high rates of retention and completion of credits. More than one fourth of the group attained cumulative grade point averages of 3.00 or above. By June, 1986, six had been awarded associate degrees and been accepted to senior colleges, and at least 14 more are expected to do so by the end of 1986.

Possible explanations for the students' success here included: initially high levels of academic ability; motivation and developmental progress (almost all were in their early 20's); and supportive characteristics of Kingsborough.

The program recently received CUNY recognition and funding as a 1986-87 Exemplary Programs Project. As of September, 1986, students from Queens College and College of Staten Island (baccalaureate level), as well as from Brooklyn, will be invited to participate. Plans for follow-up research are in progress.

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In mid-1985 the New Start Program was initiated at Kingsborough Community College by President Leon Goldstein in response to University-wide concern about student retention. Over several years it had been observed that students who transferred to Kingsborough from senior colleges frequently were able to make excellent use of the academic opportunity. The new program was designed to encourage and assist more students to do so.

With the cooperation of President Robert Hess of Brooklyn College, a letter was sent at the end of the Spring, 1985, semester to several hundred students who were about to be dismissed from Brooklyn. They were invited to attend an orientation session at Kingsborough and, if interested, to apply for September, 1985, admission. Because they had not yet been dismissed, they were offered the opportunity to enter as students in good standing. In accordance with College policy, up to 30 of each student's previous college credits could be used toward an associate degree, and only grades earned at Kingsborough would count in the student's index here. They were assigned a counselor to assist them in adjusting and to monitor their progress.

Enrollment at KCC

A total of 51 students (45 full-time, 6 part-time) registered in the New Start Program for Fall '85. Initial course loads ranged from 3 to 19 credits/equated credits, with a mean of 12.38. Thirty-two attended the winter module, taking an average of 5.34 credits/equated credits.

In Spring '86, 43 of the original group returned and were joined by 12 additional New Start students. Of these 55, 46 were full-time and 9 part-time; course loads ranged from 4 to 20 credits/equated credits, with a mean of 12.83. Twenty-six are now attending the summer module, registered for an average of 5.19 credits/equated credits.

The enrollment statistics are summarized in Table 1.

The curricula they most frequently chose were Liberal Arts, Business Administration, Biology, and Accounting. Complete data on their curriculum choices are presented in Table 2.

Previous Academic Records

The New Start Students' previous curricula at Brooklyn College are listed in Table 3. Approximately two out of three had not declared a major there.

Almost all were facing academic dismissal from Brooklyn College because they had accumulated substantial negative deviation indices. Their deviation indices ranged from -6 (1.79 grade point average) to -93 (0.83 grade point average), with a mean of -35.76. Examination of their transcripts revealed that penalty grades for unofficial withdrawal were a major factor in many of these negative indices.

Credits earned at Brooklyn ranged from 0 to 73, with a mean of 30.10. In addition, seven of the students had each attended one or two other colleges prior to entering Brooklyn College; these included Bronx Community, Borough of Manhattan Community, Medgar Evers, New York City Tech, SUNY at Stony Brook, Bard College, Long Island University, Norwich University, and even, in one case, Kingsborough. When credits from these institutions were added to the total, the mean number of previous credits earned by New Start students increased to 35.02.

Most of the students had passed all three CUNY Skills Assessment Tests by the time they left Brooklyn College. Of the 53 students whose math scores were available, 49 had passed the math test and none needed a remedial course; their mean score was 30.79. Of the 52 available reading scores, 50 were passing; the means ranged from 26.00 on Form E to 36.13 on Form A. Forty-six of 52 students had passed the writing test, and only one, an ESL student, still needed a non-credit writing course. These data are summarized in Table 4.

Performance at KCC

With very few exceptions, these students demonstrated that transferring to Kingsborough was indeed a "new start" for them.

Retention, Grade Point Averages and Rates of Completion

Once registered, the New Start students tended not to drop out. Of the Fall '85 entrants, four did not complete their first semester, but two of these four had been taking only one course each. Of the 55 students who registered for Spring '86, only two did not complete the semester.

The City University evaluates academic performance in terms of grade point average and rate of completion of credits. As a group and as individuals, the students in the program generally did quite well in relation to these criteria. Seventeen achieved cumulative grade point averages of 3.00 or above, including seven who took enough credits to be on the Dean's List at least once. Nearly half (29) of the group had perfect (100%) rates of completion for the year. The mean grade point average for the program participants was 2.39; their mean rate of completion was 81.67%. Their grade point averages compare favorably with those of other students at the College. For example, a mean grade point average of 2.02 was attained by a recent entering freshman class at the end of their first semester here (Fox, 1986).

Of the few students who did not do satisfactorily (11 had indices below 2.00 and 6 had rates of completion below 50%), most were among those who entered in Fall '85 and did not return for Spring '86. This small group had a mean grade point average of 1.31 and rate of completion of 57.75%. As is shown in Table 5, this was the only group whose academic performance was not well within the satisfactory range.

Data concerning New Start students' grade point averages and rates of progress are presented in Tables 5,6, and 7.

Progress Toward Degrees

As of June, 1986, six New Start students had earned associate degrees from Kingsborough, including three in liberal arts and one each in biology, broadcasting, and business administration. Each of the six had been accepted for September, 1986, at least one senior college, including Hunter, Baruch, the CUNY Baccalaureate Program, SUNY College at Brockport, C.W. Post College, and the University of Bridgeport. At least 14 more students are likely to have completed their associate degrees by the end of Fall '86.

Several New Start students have earned as many as 37 credits so far at Kingsborough (excluding equated credits, Summer '86 courses, and courses with pending INC and Z grades). Those who have been here since Fall '85 earned an average of 22.80 credits. Those who entered in Spring '86 earned an average of 8.82 credits, and those who did not return after Fall '85 earned an average of 5.63 credits. These statistics are included in Tables 5 and 8.

Of the 53 students whose advanced standing credits have been officially evaluated, the mean number of transfer credits applicable toward the associate degree is 21.32.

Other Indications of Success

In addition to completing or making satisfactory progress toward associate degrees, students in the program were constructive contributors to the College community during the year. New Start students were among those elected to College Council and student constituency council offices; some became Peer Advisors or worked as tutors in Tutorial Services. One was a highly successful participant in the new Honors Program, and another was admitted to the Local 802 baccalaureate music program and was featured as soloist at the recent Dean's List reception.

Discussion

There are several probable explanations for the fact that the New Start students generally were successful when they transferred to Kingsborough.

Academic Ability

All students in the program had previously been matriculated at Brooklyn College, the prerequisite for which ordinarily is a high school average of 80% or above. In fact, several had originally been admitted to the highly selective four-year B.A.- M.A. programs. Also, as indicated above and in Table 4, almost all entered Kingsborough with passing scores on all three CUNY Skills Assessment Tests. These observations suggest that lack of academic ability may not have been the primary reason for many of these students' poor records at Brooklyn.

Motivation and Maturation

Of the several hundred Brooklyn College students who were eligible for New Start, 63 accepted the invitation to enroll. It is likely, then, that a substantial selection effect ("survival of the fittest") contributed to the results. Those who had the motivation to pursue their education after a negative initial experience were likely to be the ones who would eventually succeed.

Many of these students stated that being almost dismissed from Brooklyn College had been a jarring, but ultimately valuable, experience. When asked why they were doing so much better now, most mentioned having recently realized the value of education for themselves. They often spoke of not having felt ready for or interested in college as freshmen who were conforming to parental pressure. Some said they had trouble maintaining interest in school because they lacked career goals; others reported having found the core curriculum too general to help them decide on a major. In short, they evidently had experienced many of the late-adolescent developmental problems that often are related to attrition and poor academic performance.

Indeed, their initial difficulty with career goals is reflected by their high proportion of undeclared majors at Brooklyn (see Table 3). It is also notable that 15 of them eventually manifested interest in business-related majors (Business Administration, Travel and Tourism, Marketing Management) that had not been available to them while they were at Brooklyn (see Table 2). By the time they came to Kingsborough, most had had some work experience and were able to designate at least tentative career choices.

Further support for the maturational explanation can be found in Table 9: Almost all were born in the mid-1960's, so they were in their early 20's when they arrived at Kingsborough. People who work with adolescents and young adults will recognize this as the age when education often is first appreciated. One New Start student summarized his attitudinal and motivational transformation most succinctly: "I grew up."

Kingsborough

Many New Start students attributed their success at Kingsborough to various characteristics of the College itself. They tended to specify the small class size, the availability of support services, and -- especially -- the prevalence of caring faculty members who knew their names and welcomed their questions. The College was often characterized by these students as a place where good education is available without intense pressure and competition. Participants in this program undoubtedly are among the most appreciative students in the College.

Counseling

New Start students tended to make extensive and constructive use of counseling services. Most initially requested various types of academic orientation (degree requirements, academic policies and procedures, course expectations). Career planning was needed by many, although they seemed more sophisticated in this area than do most entering students. Almost all had jobs, often full-time or nearly full-time, and tended to need assistance with time and priorities management. Finally, future academic planning beyond Kingsborough was an overriding concern. This issue consumed a great deal of counseling time: With any student who was interested in attending any senior college outside CUNY, extensive evaluation of combined and probable grade point averages had to be conducted, and additional assistance with the admissions process (e.g., discussing explanatory essays, contacting admissions personnel, writing extra letters of recommendation) was needed. An example of the type of extra recommendation letter used appears in Appendix A.

Counseling the students in the program required extra effort, but it had its rewards. To work with such highly motivated and appreciative individuals, and to see them salvage their academic careers and future plans, was rewarding indeed.

Conclusion

The first-year success of the New Start Program suggests that it is a promising way to help students who ordinarily would no longer be able to attend college.

For the Fall, 1986, semester, the New Start Program will be expanded to include students from two additional CUNY units, Queens College and College of Staten Island (baccalaureate level). The concept of the program was commended by the City University's Chancellor (see Appendix B), and it has been selected for funding through the University as a 1986-87 Exemplary Programs Project.

A longitudinal research study is being planned to follow up the progress of this year's New Start students, and additional research will be conducted as part of the Exemplary Programs Project.

Reference

Fox, R. (1986). Freshman academic performance and retention. Kingsborough Community College Institutional Research Report No. 55.

Table 1
Enrollment and Course Loads of New Start Students, 1985-86 Academic Year

Semester	Entered Fall '86	Entered Spr. '86	Combined
Fall '85			
no. of students	51	—	—
(full-/part-time)	(45/6)		
mean no. of credits	12.38		
Winter'86			
no. of students	32	—	—
mean no. of credits	5.34		
Spring '86			
no. of students	43	12	55
(full-/part-time)	(35/8)	(11/1)	(46/9)
mean no. of credits	12.60	13.08	12.83
Summer '86			
no. of students	19	7	26
mean no. of credits	4.84	6.14	5.19

Table 2
New Start Students' Curricula at KCC

Curriculum	No. of students
Liberal Arts	14
Business Administration	12
Biology	7
Accounting	7
Nursing/Pre-Nursing	4
Broadcasting	3
Data Processing	3
Early Childhood Education	3
Computer Science	2
Mathematics	2
Travel and Tourism	2
Chemistry	1
Music	1
Pre-Physical Therapy	1
Marketing Management	1
Total	63

Table 3
New Start Students' Previous Curricula at Brooklyn College

Curriculum	No. of students	
Undeclared	40	
Accounting	5	
Biology	4	(includes 2 in BA/MA program)
Psychology	3	(includes 1 in BA/MA program)
Education	2	
Health Science	2	
Sociology	2	
Computer & Information Science	1	
Economics	1	
History	1	
Mathematics	1	
Physical Education	1	
Total	63	

Table 4
New Start Students' CUNY Skills Assessment Categories
(Entering KCC)

Mathematics	No. of students
Passed	49
Self-study	4
Math R2	0
Math M1	0
No score available	10
Total	63

mean score: 30.79

Reading	
Passed	50
Eng 04	2
Eng 03	0
No score available	11
Total	63

mean scores: Form A - 36.13 (n=23)
Form C - 33.42 (n=19)
Form D - 28.57 (n=7)
Form E - 26.00 (n=3)

Writing	
Passed	46
Eng C2	5
Eng C1	1 (ESL)
No score available	11
Total	63

Table 5
New Start Students' Mean Grade Point Averages, Rates of Completion, and Credits Earned at KCC as of June, 1986

Semesters attended	No. of students	Mean GPA	Mean rate(%)	Mean credits earned*
Fall '85 - Spr. '86	43	2.57	86.60	22.80
Fall '85 only	8	1.31	57.75	5.63
Spr. '86 only	12	2.48	87.18	8.82
Combined	63	2.39	81.67	18.10

*Excluding equated credits, Summer '86 courses, and courses with pending INC and Z grades.

Table 6
New Start Students' Grade Point Averages as of June, 1986

GPA	No. of students
3.00 or above	17*
2.00 - 2.99	34
below 2.00	11
no GPA (withdrew officially)	1
Total	63

*Includes 7 on Dean's List at least once

Table 7
New Start Students' Rates of Completion as of June, 1986

Rate of completion	No. of students
100%	29
75-99%	18
50-74%	10
below 50%	6
Total	63

Table 8
KCC Credits Earned by New Start Students Between 9/85 and 6/86

Credits earned*	No. of students: Attended F'85-S'86	Attended F'85 only	Attended S'86 only
36 and over	4	0	0
30 - 35.5	6	0	0
24 - 29.5	13	0	0
18 - 23.5	9	0	0
12 - 17.5	5	1	2
6 - 11.5	4	3	8
0 - 5.5	2	4	2
Total	43	8	12
mean credits earned	22.80	5.63	8.82

* Excluding equated credits, Summer '86 courses, and courses with pending INC and Z grades

Table 9
New Start Students' Demographic Information

Year of birth	No. of students
1966	4
1965	32
1964	12
1963	6
1962	3
1961	1
1960	1
1955	1
1950	2
1946	1
Total	63

Gender	No. of students
male	33
female	30
Total	63

Appendix A

Kingsborough Community College
of
The City University of New York

Office of Career Counseling & Placement
Department of Student Services
2001 Oriental Boulevard
Brooklyn, New York 11235
212/934-5115
718

March 20, 1986

Letter of Recommendation for M—— J——

I have been M—— J——'s counselor since she came to Kingsborough last September. In cooperation with Brooklyn College, we have a New Start Program for students who did not do well at Brooklyn but had demonstrated potential to do college work. On the basis of her high scores on the CUNY Skills Assessment Tests, M—— was admitted to Kingsborough as a New Start student.

Like many private high school graduates who enroll at large public senior colleges such as Brooklyn, M—— found the transition from high school to college especially unsettling. She also found it difficult to be a full-time student while also maintaining a heavy off-campus work schedule. She did succeed in earning 33 credits in her three semesters at Brooklyn.

My experience with the New Start Program indicates that these students are among the most highly motivated at our College. They have had a chance to think about what they really want from their education and are serious about this second chance to achieve it. Therefore, I was pleased but not surprised when M—— J——'s name appeared on the Dean's List after her first semester here.

In August M—— plans to complete her A.A.S. degree in Broadcast Technology and Management. She is interested in pursuing a bachelor's degree in communications. I am confident that she has both the ability and the motivation to achieve this goal, and I recommend her very highly.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Winchell

Anne E. Winchell, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Student Development

The City University of New York
535 East Eightieth Street
New York, New York 10021

The Chancellor

6 September 1985

President Leon M. Goldstein
Kingsborough Community College
of The City University of New York
Oriental Boulevard
Brooklyn, New York 11235

Dear Leon:

Just a note to tell you that you'll probably be interested in knowing that the New Start program has been included in a list of initiatives which I'm calling to the attention of the Board of Trustees. It is a genuinely innovative idea and I want to compliment you and your faculty for devising it.

I look forward to working with you and Kingsborough Community College during the course of the coming year.

Warmest personal regards.

Cordially,

Joseph S. Murphy

JSM:cf

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